



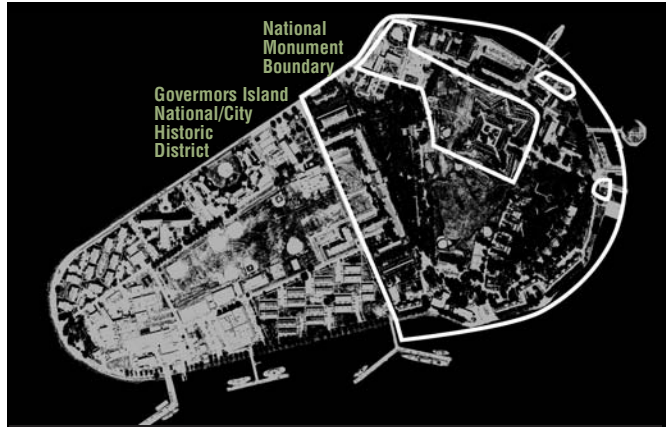
# GOVERNORS ISLAND

## NATIONAL MONUMENT

NOVEMBER, 2003 | Newsletter issue no. 1



## New York, Say Hello to Your New National Park

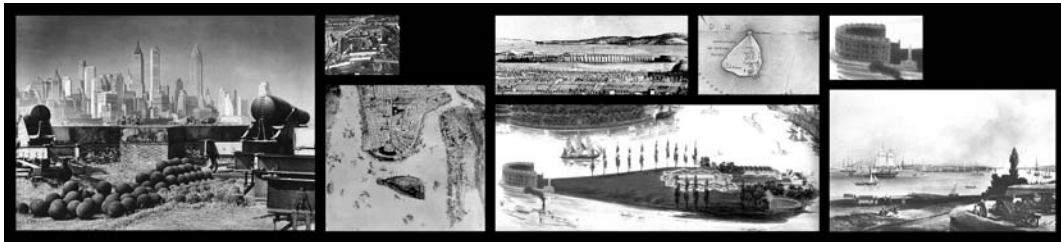


Governors Island is New York's best-kept secret. For more than 200 years, the public's contact with the Island, a stone's throw from Manhattan and Brooklyn, has been mostly in the form of glimpses from the Staten Island ferry and Brooklyn Bridge. But with the establishment of Governors Island National Monument, the island's secrets are about to be revealed.

Federal designation is only the first step to making Governors Island National Monument a national park in the truest sense—a place that protects the fascinating history and

character of the island, while providing visitors a chance to learn, explore, and play. The next step is to develop a plan for the Monument, which comprises 22 acres of the 172-acre island.

## The History of Governors Island reflects our country's beginnings and growth as a Nation



**1600s:** For Native Americans, the island was a place to hunt, fish and gather nuts – hence its Algonquin name: Paggananck. When the Dutch first settled New York, they first stayed on the island, wary of the wilderness across the water, later known as Manhattan.

Adapting the Native American name, the Dutch called it Nutten Island. One Dutch governor built a sawmill on the island to supply timber to a growing community in New Netherlands. Another governor bought it for speculative purposes under shady circumstances, clouding its legal ownership for decades.

**1700s:** When the Dutch gave up New York to the British, the colonial legislature gave the island over to the royal governors for exclusive use as a retreat and game preserve. At other times it was a goat farm, tobacco plantation and quarantine station for German immigrants. In 1755, the British Army dedicated the island to the purpose it would serve for over two centuries: a fortified harbor defense.

**1800s:** As a young American nation emerged, it was uncertain of its place in the world and its relationship with Great Britain. The new federal government constructed Fort Jay and Castle Williams to defend New York City and its harbor, vividly remembering its loss and occupation by the British during the American Revolution. During the War of 1812, these fortifications deterred a British invasion, sparing the fiery fate that befell Washington, D.C.

By the 1830s, Governors Island evolved into a military administrative center. During the Civil War, Castle Williams held Confederate soldier prisoners and later was part of the U.S. military prison system. After the Civil War, Army commands for the eastern United States were headquartered here.

**1900s:** In 1901, the island was expanded by over 100 acres with landfill from the construction of the Lexington Avenue subway line, providing an open space that was used for polo grounds and an army airfield, launching Wilbur Wright, Glenn Curtiss, and "Hap" Arnold, an early leader of the modern U.S. Air Force. In 1939, the United States First Army made Governors Island its home.

In 1966, the island changed hands from the U.S. Army to the U.S. Coast Guard, becoming their largest installation in the world. The Coast Guard built apartment buildings and other facilities to serve the needs of its operations and for more than 800 families that made the island their home. At the height of its operations, the Coast Guard had about 4,600 members and dependents on the island and another 1,700 civilian and military staff commuting via a ferry each day. In 1996, the Coast Guard closed its base on Governors Island as part of a federal budget-streamlining plan and moved all personnel and operations off the island.

**Today:** When the Coast Guard left, the General Services Administration (GSA) became the island's caretaker. As a provision of the 1997 Balanced Budget Act, the U.S. Congress directed GSA to sell the island at fair market value – raising fears among New Yorkers that the island would be sold to the highest bidder and privatized. Public officials, numerous civic groups and private citizens asked the President to return Governors Island back to New York and the public. In 2001, President Clinton initiated this process by declaring Fort Jay and Castle Williams a National Monument, thereby preserving a portion of the island as a permanent public park. In 2002, President Bush set in motion actions that would ultimately result in the transfer of the rest of the island to New York.

On January 31, 2003, the 22-acre National Monument was legally transferred to the National Trust for Historic Preservation and subsequently to the Department of the Interior, to be managed by the National Park Service. The remaining 150 acres of the island were sold for \$1.00 to the Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation (GIPEC), a business corporation acting on behalf of the State and City of New York, subject to legal agreements that the Island will be used as "an educational, recreational and cultural center that will offer a broad range of public uses."

**The Future:** The creation of the National Monument offers challenges and opportunities to us all. How can we best protect the Island's cultural and natural resources? What activities or experiences should be offered to the visitors? By participating in the National Park Service planning process, **YOU CAN MAKE SURE YOUR VOICE IS HEARD!**

### THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE INVITES YOU TO HELP DECIDE THE FUTURE OF NEW YORK'S NEWEST NATIONAL PARK.

Please come to one of our public meetings to learn more about the Island and give us your ideas. Meetings will be held:

• **NOVEMBER 17TH** from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. at Founder's Hall, St Francis College, Downtown Brooklyn

• **NOVEMBER 20TH** from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. at the U.S. Custom House, Bowling Green, Lower Manhattan

• **NOVEMBER 20TH** from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. at the U.S. Custom House, Bowling Green, Lower Manhattan

## A Plan for Governors Island National Monument

The 1978 National Parks and Recreation Act requires the National Park Service (NPS) to create general management plans (GMPs) for all national parks. GMPs describe a long-term management strategy appropriate to the specific conditions of each park. The Governors Island National Monument GMP will address resource preservation and protection, carrying capacity, visitor use and development issues for the National Monument. The NPS will address these issues within the context of the rest of Governors Island, New York City and New York Harbor. The GMP will be completed by Winter, 2006.

While the NPS is responsible for the Monument, the Governors Island Preservation and Education Corporation (GIPEC) is responsible for developing a plan for the rest of the island. The NPS and GIPEC are working to coordinate these separate plans to achieve a spectacular new destination in New York Harbor.

The National Park Service has just started its planning for the Governors Island National Monument, which is anticipated to be a focal point for visitors to the island, especially for those seeking to better understand the island's rich history and explore its historic buildings and grounds. With input from you and other members of the public, the NPS will develop alternative scenarios for how best to preserve the Monument's historic structures and share the island's stories with visitors. Next summer, the NPS will present preliminary alternatives in a newsletter to get additional public feedback.

## A Special Place

So what's so special about Governors Island? Many of its notable features are within a 93-acre National Historic Landmark District: Victorian and federal-style buildings, early 19th century fortifications, hundred year old shade trees, landscaped grounds and stunning views of the Lower Manhattan skyline, the Statue of Liberty and New York Harbor.

The highlights of the National Monument are Fort Jay and Castle Williams. Star-shaped Fort Jay dominates the island and is one of the best-preserved and largest fortifications of its type in the nation. Its dry moat and earthen-covered walls represent important and innovative military technology of its era. Castle Williams is a massive three-tier, 200-foot diameter masonry fort. Eight-foot sandstone walls and unique "casemated" tiers made the Castle virtually invulnerable, and its 102 guns made the fort one of the most formidable American seacoast defenses of its time.

# Directions to Meetings

Founder’s Hall of St. Francis College 180 Remson Street at Court Street in downtown Brooklyn. Founder’s Hall is left of the main security entrance of the College, past the art gallery. To get there: By Subway: 7th Avenue (2 or 3) or Lexington (4 or 5) to Borough Hall; A or F lines to Jay Street-Borough Hall; N to Court-Montague. By Bus: B-25, B-26, B-37, B-38, B-41, B-45, B-51, B-52, or B-67 to Court Street/Borough Hall area

United States Custom House, One Bowling Green at State Street. To get there: By Subway: 1/9 to South Ferry; 4 or 5 to Bowling Green; N or R to Whitehall Street-South Ferry; M, J or Z to Broad Street. By Bus: M1, M6, M15 to Bowling Green.

If you cannot attend these November meetings, please give us your comments by logging on to: [www.governorsislandnationalmonument.org](http://www.governorsislandnationalmonument.org) or filling out the attached form

# The National Park Service invites you to help decide the future of New York’s newest National Park.

Please give us your comments by logging on to: [www.governorsislandnationalmonument.org](http://www.governorsislandnationalmonument.org)

...OR, fill out the form below and Fax it to 212-514-8302 or return it to:

Governors Island National Monument  
Federal Hall  
26 Wall Street  
New York, NY 10005  
Attn: GMP

### Comments:

How should the National Park Service treat Castle Williams,Fort Jay, and the parade grounds? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What activities or experiences would you like the National Park Service to provide for visitors to the National Monument and island? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

How should the National Monument's activities relate to the rest of Governors Island, and to other attractions in the area? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any comments or questions about the National Park Service's planning process? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other comments or questions? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**If you would like to be on our Mailing List and receive information about upcoming planning meetings and other public events on or about the Island, please fill in the form below and return it via our website address, FAX number or mailing address.**

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_